

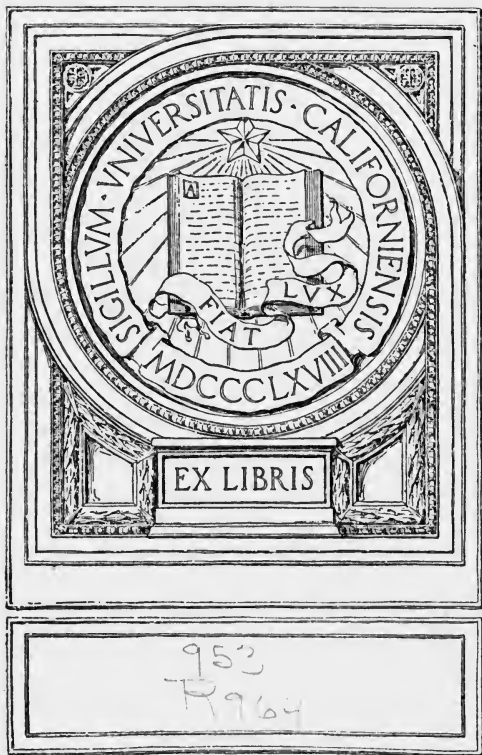
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POEMS
BY
IRWIN
RUSSELL

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POEMS BY IRWIN RUSSELL

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BY
IRWIN RUSSELL



NEW-YORK
THE CENTURY CO.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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INTRODUCTION

THERE are books that are written and published with high hopes and ambitious longings, but this volume is in the nature of a memorial to its author. It represents the results of the brief literary career of IRWIN RUSSELL, of Mississippi, who was born at Port Gibson, Mississippi, on the 3d of June, 1853, and who died at New Orleans on the 23d of December, 1879.

He possessed, in a remarkable degree, what has been described as the poetical temperament, and though he was little more than twenty-six years old at the time of his death, his sufferings and his sorrows made his life a long one. He had at his command everything that affection could suggest; he had loyal friends wherever he went; but, in spite of all this, the way-

wardness of genius led continually in the direction of suffering and sorrow. In the rush and hurly-burly of the practical, every-day world, he found himself helpless; and so, after a brief struggle, he died.

IRWIN RUSSELL was among the first — if not the very first — of Southern writers to appreciate the literary possibilities of the negro character, and of the unique relations existing between the two races before the war, and was among the first to develop them. The opinion of an uncritical mind ought not to go for much, but it seems to me that some of IRWIN RUSSELL's negro-character studies rise to the level of what, in a large way, we term literature. His negro operetta, "Christmas-Night in the Quarters," is inimitable. It combines the features of a character study with a series of bold and striking plantation pictures that have never been surpassed. In this remarkable group,— if I may so term it,— the old life before the war is reproduced with a fidelity that is marvelous.

But the most wonderful thing about the dialect poetry of IRWIN RUSSELL is his accurate conception of the negro character. The dialect is not always the best,—it is often carelessly written,—but the negro is there, the old-fashioned, unadulterated negro, who is still dear to the Southern heart. There is no straining after effect — indeed, the poems produce their result by indirection ; but I do not know where could be found to-day a happier or a more perfect representation of negro character.

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS.

CHRISTMAS-NIGHT IN THE QUARTERS

WHEN merry Christmas-day is done,
And Christmas-night is just begun;
While clouds in slow procession drift,
To wish the moon-man "Christmas gift,"
Yet linger overhead, to know
What causes all the stir below;
At Uncle Johnny Booker's ball
The darkies hold high carnival.
From all the country-side they throng,
With laughter, shouts, and scraps of song,—
Their whole deportment plainly showing
That to the Frolic they are going.
Some take the path with shoes in hand,
To traverse muddy bottom-land;
Aristocrats their steeds bestride —
Four on a mule, behold them ride!

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CHRISTMAS-NIGHT IN THE QUARTERS

And ten great oxen draw apace
The wagon from "de oder place,"
With forty guests, whose conversation
Betokens glad anticipation.
Not so with him who drives: old Jim
Is sagely solemn, hard, and grim,
And frolics have no joys for him.
He seldom speaks but to condemn—
Or utter some wise apothegm—
Or else, some crabbed thought pursuing,
Talk to his team, as now he's doing:

Come up heah, Star! Yee-bawee!

You alluz is a-laggin'—

Mus' be you think I's dead,

An' dis de huss you's draggin'—

You's 'mos' too lazy to draw yo' bref,

Let 'lone drawin' de waggin.

Dis team—quit bel'rin', sah!

De ladies don't submit 'at—

Dis team — you ol' fool ox,
You heah me tell you quit 'at?
Dis team's des like de 'Nited States;
Dat's what I's tryin' to git at!

De people rides behin',
De pollytishners haulin' —
Sh'u'd be a well-bruk ox,
To foller dat ar callin' —
An' sometimes nuffin won't do dem steers,
But what dey mus' be stallin'!

Woo bahgh! Buck-kannon! Yes, sah,
Sometimes dey will be stickin';
An' den, fus thing dey knows,
Dey takes a rale good lickin'.
De folks gits down: an' den watch out
For hommerin' an' kickin'.

Dey blows upon dey hands,
Den flings 'em wid de nails up,
Jumps up an' cracks dey heels,
An' pruzently dey sails up,

An' makes dem oxen hump deyself,
By twistin' all dey tails up!

In this our age of printer's ink
'Tis books that show us how to think—
The rule reversed, and set at naught,
That held that books were born of thought.
We form our minds by pedants' rules,
And all we know is from the schools;
And when we work, or when we play,
We do it in an ordered way—
And Nature's self pronounce a ban on,
Whene'er she dares trangress a canon.
Untrammeled thus the simple race is
That "wuks the craps" on cotton places.
Original in act and thought,
Because unlearned and untaught.
Observe them at their Christmas party:
How unrestrained their mirth—how hearty!
How many things they say and do
That never would occur to you!

See Brudder Brown — whose saving grace
 Would sanctify a quarter-race —
 Out on the crowded floor advance,
 To “ beg a blessin’ on dis dance.”

O Mahsr ! let dis gath’rin’ fin’ a blessin’ in yo’ sight !
 Don’t jedge us hard fur what we does — you knows it’s
 Chrismus-night ;
 An’ all de balance ob de yeah we does as right’s we kin.
 Ef dancin’s wrong, O Mahsr ! let de time excuse
 de sin !

We labors in de vineya’d, wukin’ hard an’ wukin’
 true ;
 Now, shorely you won’t notus, ef we eats a grape or
 two,
 An’ takes a leetle holiday, — a leetle restin’-spell, —
 Bekase, nex’ week, we’ll start in fresh, an’ labor twicet
 as well.

Remember, Mahsr, — min’ dis, now, — de sinfulness ob
 sin
 Is ‘pendin’ ‘pon de sperrit what we goes an’ does it in :

6 CHRISTMAS-NIGHT IN THE QUARTERS

An' in a righchis frame ob min' we's gwine to dance an'
sing,

A-feelin' like King David, when he cut de pigeon-wing.

✓ It seems to me — indeed it do — I mebbe mout be
wrong —

That people raly *ought* to dance, when Chrismus
comes along ;

Des dance bekase dey's happy — like de birds hops in
de trees,

De pine-top fiddle soundin' to de bowin' ob de breeze.

~~We has no ark to dance afore, like Isrul's prophet king ;
We has no harp to soun' de chords, to holp us out to
sing ;~~

~~But 'cordin' to de gif's we has we does de bes' we
knows,~~

~~An' folks don't 'spise de vi'let-flower bekase it ain't de
rose.~~

✓ You bless us, please, sah, eben ef we's doin' wrong to-
night ;

Kase den we'll need de blessin' more'n ef we's doin'
right;

An' let de blessin' stay wid us, untel we comes to die,
An' goes to keep our Chrismus wid dem sheriffs in de
sky!

Amen

Yes, tell dem preshis anguls we's a-gwine to jine 'em soon:
Our voices we's a-trainin' fur to sing de glory tune;
We's ready when you wants us, an' it ain't no matter
when —

O Mahsr! call yo' chillen soon, an' take 'em home!
Amen.

—

The rev'rend man is scarcely through,
When all the noise begins anew,
And with such force assaults the ears,
That through the din one hardly hears
Old fiddling Josey "sound his A,"
Correct the pitch, begin to play,
Stop, satisfied, then, with the bow,
Rap out the signal dancers know:

—

Git yo' pardners, fust kwattillion !
Stomp yo' feet, an' raise 'em high ;
Tune is : " Oh ! dat water-million !
Gwine to git to home bime-bye."
S'lute yo' pardners ! — scrape perlitely —
Don't be bumpin' gin de res'—
Balance all !— now, step out rightly ;
Alluz dance yo' lebbel bes'.
Fo'wa'd foah ! — whoop up, niggers !
Back ag'in ! — don't be so slow!—
Swing cornahs ! — min' de figgers !
When I hollers, den yo' go.
Top ladies cross ober !
Hol' on, till I takes a dram —
Gemmen solo ! — yes, *I's* sober —
Cain't say how de fiddle am.
Hands around !— hol' up yo' faces,
Don't be lookin' at yo' feet !
Swing yo' pardners to yo' places !
Dat's de way — dat's hard to beat.
Sides fo'w'd ! — when you's ready —
Make a bow as low's you kin !

Swing acrost wid opp'site lady !

Now we'll let you swap ag'in :

Ladies change ! — shet up dat talkin' ;

Do yo' talkin' arter while !

Right an' lef' ! — don't want no walkin'—

Make yo' steps, an' show yo' style !

And so the “set” proceeds — its length

Determined by the dancers' strength ;

And all agree to yield the palm

For grace and skill to “Georgy Sam,”

Who stamps so hard, and leaps so high,

“Des watch him!” is the wond'ring cry —

“De nigger mus' be, for a fac',

Own cousin to a jumpin'-jack !”

On, on the restless fiddle sounds,

Still chorused by the curs and hounds ;

Dance after dance succeeding fast,

Till supper is announced at last.

That scene — but why attempt to show it ?

The most inventive modern poet,

In fine new words whose hope and trust is,
Could form no phrase to do it justice !
When supper ends — that is not soon —
The fiddle strikes the same old tune ;
The dancers pound the floor again,
With all they have of might and main ;
Old gossips, *almost* turning pale,
Attend Aunt Cassy's gruesome tale
Of conjurors, and ghosts, and devils,
That in the smoke-house hold their revels ;
Each drowsy baby droops his head,
Yet scorns the very thought of bed : —
So wears the night, and wears so fast,
All wonder when they find it past,
And hear the signal sound to go
From what few cocks are left to crow.
Then, one and all, you hear them shout :
“ Hi ! Booker ! fotch de banjo out,
An' gib us *one* song 'fore we goes —
One ob de berry bes' you knows ! ”
Responding to the welcome call,
He takes the banjo from the wall,

And tunes the strings with skill and care,
Then strikes them with a master's air,
And tells, in melody and rhyme,
This legend of the olden time :

Go 'way, fiddle! folks is tired o' hearin' you
a-squawkin'.

Keep silence fur yo' betters!—don't you heah de
banjo talkin'?

About de 'possum's tail she's gwine to lecter—ladies,
listen!—

About de ha'r whut isn't dar, an' why de ha'r is
missin':

"Dar's gwine to be a' oberflow," said Noah, lookin'
solemn—

Fur Noah tuk the "Herald," an' he read de ribber
column—

An' so he sot his hands to wuk a-cl'arin' timber-
patches,

An' 'lowed he's gwine to build a boat to beat the
steamah *Natchez*.

Ol' Noah kep' a-nailin' an' a-chippin' an' a-sawin';
An' all de wicked neighbors kep' a-laughin' an'
a-pshawin';

But Noah didn't min' 'em, knowin' whut wuz gwine
to happen:

An' forty days an' forty nights de rain it kep' a-drap-
pin'.

Now, Noah had done cotched a lot ob ebry sort o'
beas'es —

Ob all de shows a-trabbelin', it beat 'em all to pieces!
He had a Morgan colt an' sebral head o' Jarsey cattle—
An' druv 'em 'board de Ark as soon's he heered de
thunder rattle.

Den sech anoder fall ob rain! — it come so awful
hebbby,

De ribber riz immejitly, an' busted troo de lebbie;
De people all wuz drowneded out — 'cep' Noah an' de
critters,

An' men he'd hired to work de boat — an' one to mix
de bitters.

De Ark she kep' a-sailin' an' a-sailin' *an'* a-sailin';
De lion got his dander up, an' like to bruk de palin';
De sarpints hissed; de painters yelled; tell, whut
wid all de fussin',
You c'u'dn't hardly heah de mate a-bossin' 'roun' an'
cussin'.

Now, Ham, de only nigger whut wuz runnin' on de
packet,
Got lonesome in de barber-shop, an' c'u'dn't stan' de
racket;
An' so, fur to amuse he-se'f, he steamed some wood
an' bent it,
An' soon he had a banjo made — de fust dat wuz invented.

He wet de ledder, stretched it on; made bridge an'
screws an' aprin;
An' fitted in a proper neck — 'twuz berry long an'
tap'rin';
He tuk some tin, an' twisted him a thimble fur to ring it;
An' den de mighty question riz: how wuz he gwine
to string it?

De 'possum had as fine a tail as dis dat I's a-singin';
De ha'r's so long an' thick an' strong,—des fit fur
banjo-stringin';

Dat nigger shaved 'em off as short as wash-day-dinner
graces;

An' sorted ob 'em by de size, f'om little E's to basses.

He strung her, tuned her, struck a jig,—'twuz "Nebber
min' de wedder,"—

She soun' like forty-lebben bands a-playin' all togedder;
Some went to pattin'; some to dancin': Noah called
de figgers;

An' Ham he sot an' knocked de tune, de happiest ob
niggers!

Now, sence dat time—it's mighty strange—dere's
not de slightes' showin'

Ob any ha'r at all upon de 'possum's tail a-growin';
An' curi's, too, dat nigger's ways: his people nebber
los' 'em—

Fur whar you finds de nigger—dar's de banjo an' de
'possum!

and no
The night is spent ; and as the day
Throws up the first faint flash of gray,
The guests pursue their homeward way ;—
And through the field beyond the gin,
Just as the stars are going in,
See Santa Claus departing — grieving —
His own dear Land of Cotton leaving.
His work is done ; he fain would rest
Where people know and love him best.
He pauses, listens, looks about ;
But go he must : his pass is out.
So, coughing down the rising tears,
He climbs the fence and disappears.
And thus observes a colored youth
(The common sentiment, in sooth) :
“ Oh ! what a blessin’ ’tw’u’d ha’ been,
Ef Santy had been born a twin !
We’d hab two Chrismuses a yeah —
Or p’r’aps *one* brudder’d *settle* heah ! ”

NEBUCHADNEZZAR

You, Nebuchadnezzah, whoa, sah !
Whar is you tryin' to go, sah ?
I'd hab you fur to know, sah,
 I's a-holdin' ob de lines.
You better stop dat prancin' ;
You's pow'ful fond ob dancin',
But I'll bet my yeah's advancin'
 Dat I'll cure you ob yo' shines.

Look heah, mule ! Better min' out ;
Fus' t'ing you know you'll fin' out
How quick I'll wear dis line out
 On your ugly, stubbo'n back.
You needn't try to steal up
An' lif' dat precious heel up ;
You's got to plow dis fiel' up,
 You has, sah, fur a fac'.

Dar, *dat's* de way to do it!
He's comin' right down to it;
Jes watch him plowin' troo it!

Dis nigger ain't no fool.
Some folks dey would 'a' beat him;
Now, dat would only heat him —
I know jes how to treat him:
You mus' *reason* wid a mule.

He minds me like a nigger.
If he wuz only bigger
He'd fotch a mighty figger,
He would, I *tell* you! Yes, sah!
See how he keeps a-clickin'!
He's as gentle as a chicken,
An' nebber thinks o' kickin' —
Whoa dar! Nebuchadnezzah!

Is dis heah me, or not me?
Or is de debbil got me?
Wuz dat a cannon shot me?
Hab I laid heah more'n a week?

Dat mule do kick amazin'!
De beast wuz sp'iled in raisin'—
But now I 'spect he's grazin'
On de oder side de creek.

BUSINESS IN MISSISSIPPI

WHY, howdy, Mahsr Johnny! Is you gone to keepin' store?

Well, sah, I is surprised! I nebber heard ob dat afore.

Say, ain't you gwine to gib me piece o' good tobacco, please?

I's 'long wid you in Georgia, time we all wuz refugees.

I know'd you would; I alluz tells the people, white an' black,

Dat you's a r'al gen'l'man, an' dat's de libin' fac' —

Yes, sah, dat's what I tells 'em, an' it's nuffin else but true,

An' all de cullud people thinks a mighty heap ob you.

Look heah, sah, don't you want to buy some cotton ?

Yes, you do ;

Dere's oder people wants it, but I'd rader sell to you.

How much ? Oh, jes a bale—dat on de wagon in de street—

Dis heah's de sample,—dis cotton's mighty hard to beat !

You'll fin' it on de paper, what de offers is dat's made ;
Dey's all de same seditions,—half in cash, half in trade.

Dey's mighty low, sah ; come, now, can't you 'prove upon de rates

Dat Barrot Brothers offers—only twelb an' seben-eights ?

Lord, Mahsr Johnny, raise it ! Don't you know dat I's a frien',

An' when I has de money I is willin' fur to *spen'* ?

My custom's wuff a heap, sah ; jes you buy de bale an' see.

Dere didn't nebber nobody lose nuffin off ob me.

Now, what's de use ob gwine dere an' a-zaminin' ob de
bale ?

When people trades wid me dey alluz gits an hones'
sale ;

I ain't no han' fur cheatin' ; I beliebes in actin' fa'r,
An' ebry-body'll tell you dey alluz foun' me squar'.

I isn't like *some* niggers ; I declar' it is a shame
De way some ob dem swin'les—What ! de cotton ain't
de same

As dat's in de sample ! well, I'm blest, sah, ef it is !
Dis heah must be my *brudder's* sample — Yes, sah, dis
is his.

If dat don't beat creation ! Heah I've done been totin'
'round

A sample different from de cotton ! I — will — be —
consound !

Mahsr Johnny, you must scuse me. Take de cotton
as it stan's,

An' tell me ef you're willin' fur to take it off my
han's.

Sho! nebber min' de auger! 'tain't a bit o' use to bore;
De bale is all de same's dis heah place de baggin's
tore;

You oughtn't to go pullin' out de cotton dat a-way;
It spiles de beauty ob de — What, sah! *rocks* in dar,
you say!

Rocks in dat ar cotton! How de debbil kin dat be?
I packed dat bale myse'f — hol' on a minute, le' — me —
see —

My stars! I mus' be crazy! Mahsr Johnny, dis is fine!
I's gone an' hauled my brudder's cotton in, instead
ob mine!

SELLING A DOG

H'YAR, Pot-liquor! What you at? You heah me call-
in' you?

H'yar, sah! Come an' tell dis little gemmen howdy-do!
Dar, sah, *ain't* dat puppy jes as fat as he kin roll?
Maybe you won't b'liebe it, but he's only six mon's ol'!

'Coon dog? Lord! young marster, he's jes at 'em all
de while;

I b'liebe dat he kin smell a 'coon fur half-a-mile.

I don' like to sell him, fur he's wuf his weight in gol';
If *you* didn't want him, sah, he nebber *should* be sol'.

If you takes him off wid you, I'll feel like I wuz lost.
He's de bes' young fightin'-dog I ebber come acrost.
Jes look at dem eyes, young marster; what a sabbage
face!—

He won't let no stranger nigger come about de place.

You know Henry Wilson's Bob, dat whipped your fader's Dan?

Pot-liquor jes chucked dat dog so bad he couldn't stan'! Well, sah, if you wants him, now I'll tell you what I'll do,—

You kin hab him fur a dollar, seein's how it's *you*.

Now, Marster Will, you *knows* it—he's wuf mo'n dat, a heap;

R'al'y, I's a-doin' wrong to let him go so cheap.

Don't you tell nobody, now, what wuz de price you paid—My ol' 'oman's gwine to gib me fits, sah, I's afraid!

T'anks you, sah! Good-mornin', sah! You tell yo' ma, fur me,

I has got de fines' turkeys dat she ebber see;

Dey is jes as good as any pusson ebber eat.

If she wants a *gobbler*, let her sen' to Uncle Pete.

Dar! I's done got rid ob dat ar wretched dog at las'! Drownin' time wuz comin' fur him mighty precious fas'! Sol' him fur a dollar—well! An' goodness knows de pup Isn't wuf de powder it'd take to blow him up!

UNCLE NICK ON FISHING

IT alluz sets me laughin', when I happens to be roun',
To see a lot ob gemmen come a-fishin' from de town!
Dey waits tell arter bre'kfus 'fore dey ebber makes a
start,

An' den you sees 'em comin' in a leetle Jarsey kyart.

Now, Jarsey kyarts is springy — so, to hab a studdy seat,
De gemmen's 'bliged to ballus her wid suffin good to
eat;

An' Jarsey kyarts runs better — so de gemmen seems
to think —

By totin' 'long a demijohn of suffin good to drink.

When dey gits at de fishin' place, it's 'stonishin' indeed —
Sech tricks to go a-fishin' wid nobody nebber seed!
Dey poles is put togedder wid a dozen j'int's ob tin,
An' has a block-an'-tickle fur to wind de fishes in!

De gemmens makes a heap o' fuss, an' skeers de fishes off;
An' den dey takes an' sots de poles, some place de
bank is sof' ;

An' den dey hunts a shady place, an' settles on de grass,
An' pruzently you heahs 'em : " Dat a spade ? I has to
pass ! "

St. Petah wuz a fisherman, an' un'erstood his trade ;
He staid an' watched his cork, instid ob laz'in' in de
shade.

De gemmen is copyin' arter him — dey better be !
Or— *I's* a science fisherman — 't'u'd do to copy *me*.

When I starts out a-fishin', I puts on my ol'est clo'es—
Dey age is putty tol'able, you'd nat'rally suppose !
I gits up in de mohnin', long afore de sun has riz,
An' grabbles wums, *I* tell you! — like de yurly bird I is.

I's alluz berry 'tic'lar 'bout de season ob de moon :
De dark ob it is fishin' time — an' time for huntin' 'coon ;
An' I's be'n fishin' nuff to know, as notus mus' be tuk
Ob vari's leetle sarcumstances bearin' on de luck :

You has to spit upon de bait, afore you draps it in ;
Mus' keep yo' cork a-bobbin',— des as easy as you kin ;
Ef some one steps acrost yo' pole, yo' luck is shorely
 broke,
Widout dey steps it back ag'in, afore a word is spoke.

Untel you quits a-fishin', don't you nebber count yo'
 string ;
Fur ef you do, you's sartin not to cotch anoder thing ;
But ef a sarpent-doctor bug sh'u'd 'light upon de pole,
You knows you's good fur cotchin' all de fishes in de
 hole.

Dar, now ! you's got de l'arnin' what a fisherman sh'u'd
 know ;
So, when you's ready, all you has to do's to up an' go,
An' foller dem instruckshums — ef you does it, to de
 notch,
Good Marster ! won't it s'prise de folks to see de mess
 you cotch !

NORVERN PEOPLE

DEM folks in de Norf is de beatin'est lot!
Wid all de brass buttons an' fixin's dey got —
You needn't tole me!—dey all dresses in blue:
I seed 'em de time 'at Grant's army come froo.

Dey libs up de country, whar ellyphunts grows,
Somewhar 'bout de head ob de ribber, I s'pose;
Whar snow keeps a-drappin, spring, winter, an' fall,
An' summer-time don't nebber git dar at all.

Up dar in dey town dar's a mighty great hole
Dey dug fur to git at de silber an' gol':
I reckon heah lately it mus' ha' cabed in —
I wish I c'u'd see a good two-bits ag'in!

Dey puts up supplies for us Christuns to eat,—
De whisky, de flouah, de meal, an' de meat;

Dey's dreffle big-feelin', an' makes a great fuss,
But dey cain't git along widout wukin' for us.

I wouldn't be dem, not fur all you c'u'd gib :
Dey nebber tas'e 'possum as long as dey lib !
Dey w'u'dn't know gumbo, ef put in dey mouf—
Why don't dey all sell out an' come to de Souf ?

But lawsy ! dey's ign'ant as ign'ant kin be,
An' ain't got de presence ob min' fur to see
Dat ol' Marsissippi's jes ober de fence
Dat runs aroun' hebben's sarcumferymence !

Now, us dat is fabored wid wisdom an' grace,
An' had de fus' pick fur a 'sirable place,
We ought fur to 'member de duty we owes,
To sheer wid our brudders as fur as it goes.

So sometime in chu'ch I's a-gwine to serjes
Dat some-un be sent what kin talk to 'em bes'—
(An' mebbe dat's *me*) fur to open deir eyes,
Recomstruc de pore critters, an' help 'em to rise.

We'll fotch 'em down heah, de las' one ob de batch,
An' treat 'em like gemmen, an' rent 'em a patch—
Why, dat's de Merlennium! Dat's what it am;
An' us is de lion, an' dey is de lamb!

WHEREFORE HE PRAYS THAT A WAR- RANT MAY ISSUE

Is you de jestis ob de peace? I has a little case
About a little matter, sah, what happened on de place.
I's nuffin but a nigger, but has feelin's, all de same,
An' de way dat Mahsr Henry went an' done me wuz
a shame.

Las' spring I foun' a little chicken runnin' in de road;
I tuk it to de quarters, an' kep' it till it growed.
I nebber stole it; kase de law sez ebrythin' you
fin'
Belongs to you; an' so, ob co'se, dat chicken, he wuz
mine.

A week dis comin' Thu'sday, I wuz comin' from de
fiel',
An' happened fur to'member I wuz out ob meat an' meal;

So I begins to study 'bout what I's a-gwine to do —
An' thinks, sez I, "Dat chicken's shorely big enough
to stew."

When I gits to de quarters, den I sez unto my wife,—
I wouldn't tell a lie to you, sah, not to sabe my life,—
"Hey, Phyllis, gal," sez I, des so, "run out dar in de
lot,
An' cotch dat Dominica fur to bile him in de pot."

Sez she to me, "I 'low myse'f, he *would* eat tol'ble
good;
But how I gwine to cook him, when I isn't got no
wood?"

Dat wuz de conbersatiorm, sah; I gibe it word fur
word,
An' Phyllis she can testify as dat wuz what occurred.

Sez I, "You kill de chicken. Does you think I's los'
my sense?"
An' I went to Mahsr's wood-pile, in de corner ob de
fence.

I looked an' didn't see nobody, heard nobody speak,
An' so I toted off enough to do me fur a week.

I nebber thought ob stealin' when I tuk dat wood away,
For ebry stick I 'spected to return some oder day;
An' ef a man cain't borry wood what's layin' out ob nights,
I'd like fur you to tell me what's the good ob *swivel*
rights?

Well! Phyllis picked de chicken, an' she soused him in
de pot;
De fire wuz burnin' libely an' de water gittin' hot;
When somefin went boo-room! boo-room! right in de
chimney-place,
An' all de fire an' ashes come a-scootin' in my face.

I thought it was de debbil, an' it skeered me' mos' to deff;
De smoke puffed out so hebby I could skacely draw my
breff;
De wood, de pot, de chicken, dey went flyin' crost de
floah,
An' me an' Phyllis had important bizness at de doah.

De folks dey come a-runnin'; dar wuz Bob an' Pete an'
Bill;

An' heah come Mahsr Henry des a-laughin' fit to kill—
Sez he, "I knowed, you rascal, you wuz takin' wood
away,

An' I put a poun' o' powder in a holler stick to-day."

Dat's why I want a warrant, sah; my rights is all I ax,
An' I has lots o' witnesses to summons to de fac's.

I scorns to be imposed on; an' I 'peals unto de law
To go fur Mahsr Henry, sah, an' bring him up to taw.

THE MISSISSIPPI WITNESS

YOAH HONAH, AN' DE JURY : Ef you'll listen, now, to
me,

I's gwine to straighten up dis case jes like it ought to be.
Dis heah's a case ob stealin' hogs — a mighty ser'ous
'fense —

An' you'll know all about it, when I gibs my ebbydence.

Dis Peter Jones, de plainter, is a member ob de chu'ch,
But Thomas Green, de fender, goodness knows he's
nuffin much ;

A lazy, triflin' nigger is dat berry Thomas Green —
Dese is de dif'rent parties you is called to jedge atween.

Now gib me stric' contention while I 'lucidates de
fac' ;

Dere's two whole sides to eberyting,—de front one an'
de back,—

What's dat de little lawyer say? To talk about de case?

Dat's jes what I wuz comin' to; you makes me lose de place.

Whar wuz I? Oh! I 'members; I wuz jes about to say,

I heered a disputation 'bout a p'int of law to-day;

'Bout how to turn State's ebbydence — dat's what dey's dribin' at —

Now ain't it strange some niggers is so ignorant as dat?

Why, when you wants to turn it, you jes has to come to town,

An' fin' de Deestric Turner — he'll be somewhar loafin' 'roun' —

An' den sez you, "Mahsr Turner, sah, I zires my compliments;

I's come in town to see you, fur to turn State's ebbydence."

As soon's you tells him dat, he knows perzackly what
you mean,

An' takes you to his office, whar he's got a big mer-
sheen,

An' dar you cotches hol' de crank, an' den you turns
away,

Untel at las' dar's somefin clicks, an' den you's come
to A.

"Is dat de letter ob de thing de feller done?" sez
he;

Ef you sez no, you turns ag'in untel you comes
to B;

An' so you keeps a-turnin', tell de right one gits
aroun',

An' dar de Deestric Turner looks, an' dar de law is
foun'.

An' den you gibbs de fac's, an' den he reads the law to
you,

An' axes you to 'vise him what you t'ink he ought to
do;

An' den he say "good-mornin'," an' he gibs you fifty cents,
An' dat's de way you has to do to turn State's ebby-dence.

Well, gemmen ob de jury, dis heah case is understood. I doesn't *know* de hog wuz stole, but Peter's word is good.
He up an' sesso manfully, dout makin' any bones ;
An' darfore, sahs, ef I wuz you, I t'ink I'd 'cide for Jones.

BLIND NED

WHO is dat ar a-playin'? Shucks! I wish I wuzn't
blin';

But when de Lord he tuk my eyes, he lef' my yeahs
behin'.

Is dat you, Mahsr Bob? I t'ought I reco'nized your
bowin';

I said I knowed 'twas you, soon's I heered de fiddle
goin'.

Sho! dat ain't right! jes' le' me show you how to
play dat tune;

I feel like I could make de fiddle talk dis arter-
noon.

Now don't you see that counter's jes a leetle bit too
high?

Well, nebber min'; I guess you'll learn to tune her
by an' by.

You's jes like all musicianers dat learns to play by
note :

You ain't got music in you, so you has to hab it wrote.
Now dat ain't science — why de debbil don't you play
by yeah ?

For dat's de onlies' kin' ob music fittin' fur to heah.

Do you suppose, when David wuz a-pickin' on de
harp,

He ebber knowed de difference atwixt a flat an' sharp ?
But any tune you called fur, he could pick it all de
same,

For David knowed de music, dough he didn't know
de name.

Now what shall I begin on ? Somefin lively, fas', an'
quick ?

Well, sah, jes pay attention, an' I'll gib you "Cap'n
Dick."

Yah ! yah ! young mahsr, don't you feel jes like you
want to pat ?

You'll hab to practice fur a while afore you ekals dat !

Dere ain't nobody 'roun' *dis* place kin play wid Uncle
Ned;
Dey isn't got it in deir fingers, neider in deir head;
Dat fiddler Bill dey talks about — I heered him play
a piece,
An' I declar' it sounded like a fox among de geese.

A violeen is like an 'ooman, mighty hard to guide,
An' mighty hard to keep in order arter once it's buyed.
Dere's alluz somefin 'bout it out ob kelter, more or
less,
An' 'tain't de fancies'-lookin' ones dat alluz does de
bes'.

Dis yer's a splendid inst'ument — I 'spec' it cost a
heap;
You r'al'y ought to let me hab dis fiddle fur to keep.
It ain't no use to you, sah; fur, widout it's in de man,
He cain't git music out de fines' fiddle in de lan'.

It 'quires a power ob science fur to fiddle, sah, you see,
An' science comes by natur'; dat's de way it is wid me.

But Lord ! dat Bill ! It 'muses me to heah him talkin'
big ;

You never heered a braggin' fiddler play a decent jig !

Dat Bill, he is a caution, sah ! I wonder now whar he
An' oder folks I knows of—yes, I wonder whar'll
dey be

In hebben, when de music's playin', an' de angels
shout —

If Bill should jine de chorus, dey would hab to put
him out.

Well, good-bye, Mahsr Bob, sah ; when you's nuffin
else to do

Jes sen' fur dis ol' darky, an' he'll come an' play fur
you ;

An' don't gib up your practisin'—you's only sebenteen,
An' maybe when you's ol' as me you'll play the violeen.

MAHSR JOHN

I HEAHS a heap o' people talkin', ebrywhar I
goes,

'Bout Washintum an' Franklum, an' sech gen'uses as
dose;

I s'pose dey's mighty fine, but heah's de p'int I's bet-
tin' on:

Dere wuzn't nar a one ob 'em come up to Mahsr
John.

He shorely wuz de greates' man de country ebber
growed.

You better had git out de way when *he* come 'long
de road!

He hel' his head up dis way, like he 'spised to see de
groun';

An' niggers had to toe de mark when Mahsr John wuz
roun'.

I only has to shet my eyes, an' den it seems to me
I sees him right afore me now, jes like he use' to be,
A-settin' on de gal'ry, lookin' awful big an' wise,
Wid little niggers fannin' him to keep away de flies.

He alluz wore de berry bes' ob planters' linen suits,
An' kep' a nigger busy jes a-blackin' ob his boots ;
De buckles on his galluses wuz made of solid gol',
An' diamon's ! — dey wuz in his shut as thick as it
would hol'.

You heered me ! 'twas a caution, when he went to
take a ride,
To see him in de kerridge, wid ol' Mistis by his
side —

Mulatter Bill a-dribin', an' a nigger on behin',
An' two Kaintucky hosses tuk 'em tearin' whar dey
gwine.

Ol' Mahsr John wuz pow'ful rich — he owned a heap
o' lan' :

Fibe cotton places, 'sides a sugar place in Loozyan' ;

He had a thousan' niggers — an' he wuked 'em,
shore's you born !

De oberseahs 'u'd start 'em at de breakin' ob de morn.

I reckon dere wuz forty ob de niggers, young an' ol,'
Dat staid about de big house jes to do what dey
wuz tol' ;

Dey had a' easy time, wid skacely any work at all —
But dey had to come a-runnin' when ol' Mahsr John
'u'd call !

Sometimes he'd gib a frolic — dat's de time you seed
de fun :

De 'ristocratic fam'lies, dey 'u'd be dar, ebry one ;
Dey'd hab a band from New Orleans to play for 'em
to dance,

An' tell you what, de *supper* wuz a '*tic'lar* sarcumstance.

Well, times is changed. De war it come an' sot de
niggers free,

An' now ol' Mahsr John ain't hardly wuf as much as
me ;

He had to pay his debts, an' so his lan' is mos'ly
gone —

An' I declar' I's sorry fur my pore ol' Mahsr John.

But when I heahs 'em talkin' 'bout some sullybrated
man,

I listens to 'em quiet, till dey done said all dey can,
An' den I 'lows dot in dem days 'at I remembers on,
Dat gemman warn't a patchin' onto my ol' Mahsr
John!

PRECEPTS AT PARTING

WELL, son, so you's gwine for to leab us, yo' lubbin'
ol' mammy an' me,

An' set yo'se'f up as a waiter, aboa'd ob de *Robbut*
E. Lee,

Along wid dem fancy young niggers, what's 'shamed fur
to look at a hoe,

An' acts like a passel ob rich folks, when dey isn't got
nuffin to show.

You's had better trainin' dan dey has — I hopes 'at
you'll zibit more sense;

Sech niggers is like a young rooster, a-settin' up top
ob a fence :

He keeps on a-stetchin' an' crowin', an', while he's
a-blowin' his horn,

Dem chickens what ain't arter fussin' is pickin' up all
ob de corn.

Now listen, an' min' what I tell you, an' don't you
forgit what I say ;

Take advice ob a 'sperienced pussen, an' you'll git up
de ladder an' stay :

Who knows ? You mought git to be Pres'dent, or jes-
tice, perhaps, ob de peace —

De man what keeps pullin' de grape-vine shakes down
a few bunches at leas'.

Dem niggers what runs on de ribber is mos'ly a mighty
sharp set ;

Dey'd fin' out some way fur to beat you, ef you bet 'em
de water wuz wet ;

You's got to watch out for dem fellers ; dey'd cheat
off de horns ob a cow.

I knows 'em ; I follered de ribber 'fore ebber I follered
a plow.

You'll easy git 'long wid de white folks,—de Cappen
an' steward an' clerks,—

Dey won't say a word to a nigger, as long as dey notice
he works ;

An' work is de onlies' ingine we's any 'casion to
tote,
To keep us gwine on troo de currents dat pesters de
spirichul boat.

I heered dat idee from a preacher: he 'lowed 'at dis
life wuz a stream,
An' ebry one's soul wuz a packet dat run wid a full
head ob steam;
Dat some ob 'em's only stern-wheelers, while oders wuz
mons'ously fine—
An' de trip wuz made safes' an' quicke's by boats ob
de Mefodis line.

I wants you, my son, to be 'tic'lar, an' 'sociate only wid
dey
Dat's 'titled to go in de cabin—don't neber hab nuffin
to say
To dem low-minded roustabout niggers what han'les de
cotton below —
Dem common brack rascals ain't fittin' for no cabin-wait-
er to know.

But nebber git airy: be 'spectful to all de white people
you see;

An' nebber go back on de raisin' you's had from your
mammy an' me.

It's hard on your mudder, your leabin' — I don' know
whatebber she'll do;

An' shorely your fader 'll miss you — I'll alluz be thinkin'
ob you.

Well, now I's done tol' you my say-so. Dar ain't nuffin
more as I knows —

'Cept dis: don't you nebber come back, sah, widout you
has money an' clo'es.

I's kep' you as long as I's gwine to, an' now you an'
me we is done —

An' calves is too skace in dis country to kill fur a prod-
igal son.

HALF-WAY DOIN'S

BELUBBED fellah-trabelers : — In holdin' forth to-day,
I doesn't quote no special verse fur whut I has to say ;
De sermon will be berry short, an' dis here am de tex' :
Dat half-way doin's ain't no 'count fur dis worl' or de
nex'.

Dis worl' dat we's a-libbin' in is like a cotton-row,
Whar ebery cullud gentleman has got his line to hoe ;
An' ebery time a lazy nigger stops to take a nap,
De grass keeps on a-growin' fur to smudder up his crap.

When Moses led de Jews acrost de waters ob de sea,
Dey had to keep a-goin' jes as fas' as fas' could be ;
Do you s'pose dat dey could ebber hab succeeded in
deir wish,
An' reached de Promised Land at las' — if dey had
stopped to fish ?

My frien's, dar wuz a garden once, whar Adam libbed
wid Eve,

Wid no one 'roun' to bodder dem, no neighbors fur
to thieve;

An' ebery day wuz Christmas, an' dey got deir rations
free,

An' eberyt'ing belonged to dem except an apple-
tree.

You all know 'bout de story — how de snake come
snoopin' 'roun',—

A stump-tail rusty moccasin, a-crawlin' on de
groun',—

How Eve an' Adam ate de fruit an' went an' hid
deir face,

Till de angel oberseer, he come an' drove 'em off de
place.

Now, s'pose dat man an' ooman hadn't 'tempted fur
to shirk,

But had gone about deir gardenin', an' 'tended to
deir work,

Dey wouldn't hab been loafin' whar dey had no business to,
An' de debbil nebber'd got a chance to tell 'em whut to do.

No half-way doin's, bredren ! It'll nebber do, I say !
Go at your task an' finish it, an' den's de time to play ;
Fur eben if de crap is good, de rain'll spile the bolls,
Unless you keeps a-pickin' in de garden ob yo' souls.

Keep a-plowin', an' a-hoein', an' a-scrapin' ob de rows,
An' when de ginnin's ober you can pay up whut you owes ;
But if you quits a-workin' ebery time de sun is hot,
De sheriff's gwine to lebbby upon eberyt'ing you's got.

Whuteber 'tis you's dribin' at, be shore an' drike it through,
An' don't let nuffin stop you, but do whut you's gwine to do ;

Fur when you sees a nigger foolin', den, as shore's
you're born,

You's gwine to see him comin' out de small eend ob
de horn.

I thanks you for de 'tention you has gib dis after-
noon —

Sister Williams will oblige us by a-raisin' ob a tune —

I see dat Brudder Johnson's 'bout to pass aroun' de
hat,

An' don't let's hab no half-way doin's when it comes
to dat !

A SERMON FOR THE SISTERS

I NEBBER breaks a colt afore he's old enough to
trabbel ;

I nebber digs my taters tell dey plenty big to
grabble.

An' when you sees me risin' up to structify in
meetin',

It's fust clumb up de knowledge-tree an' done some
apple-eatin'.

I sees some sistahs pruzint, mighty proud o' whut dey
wearin' :

It's well you isn't apples, now, you better be de-
clarin' !

Fur when ye heerd yo' markit-price, 't'd hurt yo' little
feelin's :

You wouldn't fotch a dime a peck, fur all yo' fancy
peelin's.

O sistahs! —leetle apples (fur you're r'ally mighty like
'em)—

I lubs de ol'-time russets, dough it's suldom I kin
strike 'em;

An' so I lubs you, sistahs, fur yo' grace, an' not yo'
graces —

I don't keer how my apple looks, but on'y how it
tas'es.

Is dey a Sabbaf-scholah heah? Den let him 'form his
mudder

How Jacob-in-de-Bible's boys played off upon dey
brudder!

Dey sol' him to a trader—an' at las' he struck de
prison;

Dat comed ob Joseph's struttin' in dat streaked coat
ob his'n.

My Christian frien's, dis story proobs dat eben men is
human —

He'd had a dozen fancy coats, ef he'd 'a' been a
'ooman!

De cussidness ob showin' off, he foun' out all about
it;

An' yit he wuz a Christian man, as good as ever
shouted.

It l'arned him! An' I bet you when he come to git his
riches

Dey didn't go fur stylish coats or Philadelphy
breeches;

He didn't was'e his money when experunce taught him
better,

But went aroun' a-lookin' like he's waitin' fur a
letter!

Now, sistahs, won't you copy him? Say, won't you take
a lesson,

An' min' dis sollum wahnin' 'bout de sin ob fancy
dressin'?

How much you spen' upon yo'self! I wish you might
remember

Yo' preacher ain't been paid a cent sence somewhar in
November.

I better close. I sees some gals dis sahmon's kinder
hittin'

A-whisperin', an' 'sturbin' all dat's near whar dey's
a-sittin';

To look at dem, an' listen at dey onrespec'ful jabber,
It turns de milk ob human kin'ness mighty nigh to
clabber!

A-A-A-MEN!

UNCLE CAP INTERVIEWED

GOOD-MORNIN', Mahsr — thank you, sah ; I's tol'able
myself,

Considerin' dat it's almos' time I's laid upon de shelf ;
De onlies' t'ing dat bodders much is right aroun' in
here,

Dis mis'ry in my back dat won't recease to persevere.

An' so you come to see me, sah, beca'se you hab been
tol'

Dat I's de oldes' man about ? Yes, I is mighty ol' !
A hundred an' eleben years dis comin' Christmas-day —
I couldn't tell ezzackly, but dat's whut people say.

When *I* come to dis country fust dar wa'n't no houses
'roun',

An' me an' my ole mahsr had to camp out on de
groun' ;

De fust house dat was 'rected, sah, I helped in raisin'
it —

Sometimes I tries to 'member whar it sot, but I forgit.

You Liza! ain't you nebber gwine to set dat pot to bile!
Niggers nebber was so lazy when your fader was a chile.
Dat ar's my youngest daughter, sah, a-washin' ob de
greens;

She was born de year dat Jackson fit de battle ob Or-
leans.

Dey ain't wuf shucks, dese young folks dat's a-growin'
up now'days;

I nebber seed no niggers yit dat had such triflin' ways.
I b'lieve dis country's gwine to smash — I knows, at any
rate,

Dat t'ings ain't like dey used to wuz in ole Virginny State.

So you thought 'twas Souf Ca'lina, sah, whar I was
born an' raised?

No! I'm from ole Virginny, an' fur dat de Lord be
praised!

Virginny niggers always wuz de best dat you could
buy;

Poor white trash couldn't git 'em, 'ca'se de prices wuz
so high.

Yes, sah, I's from Virginny, an' I reckon dat you mout
Have heerd of folks I knowed — dey're often talked
about.

Dar's Ginnle Washin'ton, fur one; he lived acrost de
road;

I 'spect you've heerd of him, sah? He wuz one ob dem
I knowed.

He rode about de country on a big old dapple-gray,
An' used to come an' dine with mahsr 'bout ebery
udder day;

De fines'-lookin' gentleman dat I 'most eber seed —
He tried to buy me; but old mahsr told him, "No, in-
deed!"

Whut do I t'ink of freedom? I dunno; it's true I's free,
But now I's got so awful old, whut good is 'at to me?

I nebber boddies 'bout it much — to tell the troof, my
min'

Is tuk up now in t'inkin' 'bout de place whar I's a-gwine.

De hymn says: "John de Baptis', he wuz nuffin but a
Jew,

But de Holy Bible tells us dat he wuz a preacher too,"
An' if a 'ligious Jew can 'mong de chosen few advance,
Dere shorely ain't no question but a nigger'll hab a
chance.

I done been had religion now fur gwine on sixty year,
An' my troubles is 'mos' ober, fur de end is drawin' near;
An' I know dat when I mount de skies de Lord will
make ob me

A young an' likely nigger, sah, jus' like I use' to be.

THE OLD HOSTLER'S EXPERIENCE

I GITs up heah — like good ol' Paul,
Obed'ent to de Mahsr's call —
To tell my sperunce, tell it all !
 Ol' SHAME's put up ;
An' I's led GLORY out de stall,
 To win de cup.

Den, all you sinnahs, cl'ar de track !
I's mounted on ol' GLORY's back ;
Her hufs is gwine ta-click-ta-clack,—
 Dat's how dey's gwine !
An' Satan's rattlin', shacklin' hack
 Is lef' behin'.

Ah, Christuns, in my foolish days
I rid de debbil's blooded bays,
PERSUMPCBUS PRIDE, an' WORL'LY WAYS,
 An' made 'em lope;
But now I's turned 'em out to graze
 Widout a rope.

Yah! Yah! *Oh!* how I used to — Well,
De 'tic'lars 'tain't no use to tell,
But oncet I rid de road to hell
 Wid nar a bit,
An' went two-forty on the shell
 Toward de pit.

Like Balaam, when he rid de ass,
I 'sisted on a-trablin' fas';
But 'twuz a pace 'at c'u'dn't las',
 An' I got th'owed.
I cotch RELIGION, trottin' pas',
 An' back I goed.

An' now I simply 'vises you,
You deblish boys I's talkin' to,
Don't nebber hab a thing to do
 Wid Satan's hosses;
Dey'll buck an' fling you in de sloo,
 Fus one you crosses.

But git RELIGION well in han',
An' ride her like a little man —
Dere ain't no hoss in all de lan'
 Kin run agin her —
An' you'll come by de jedges' stan'
 A' easy winner.

REV. HENRY'S WAR-SONG

Who's gwine to fight in de battle, in de battle?

Who's gwine to march wid de army ob de King?

Listen at de drums, how dey rattle, rattle, rattle:

Hark to de bullets, how dey sing!

Close up, saints, in de center!

Fall in, sinnahs, on de flanks!

'Tention! right dress! eyes front! steady!—

All stand quiet in de ranks.

Dat's right, men! keep a-standin', keep a-standin'—

Not a bit o' danger ob an inimy behin':

De ahmy's at de front, an' ouah Ginerel Commandin'

Has got out a pow'ful pickit-line!

Wait for yo' orders till dey come, den;

Keep up patience; rendah thanks

Dat you has nuffin fur to do — onless it's suffin

To stan' up waitin' in de ranks.

'Twon't be so long 'fore de orders, 'fore de orders —

Soon we'll be gittin' 'em — de orders to advance;

Den, ebry man in de column to his duty;

Show what's de value ob de chance!

Fight! an' we'll oberturn de debbil!

Fight! an' we'll hab de country's thanks!

An' all 'll git a pension an' a' honorable mention,

What stood up steady in de ranks!

LARRY'S ON THE FORCE

WELL, Katie, and is this yersilf? And where was you
this whoile?

And ain't ye dhrissed! You are the wan to illustrate
the stoile!

But niver moind thim matthers now, there's toime
enough for thim;

And Larry — that's me b'y — I want to shpake to you
av him.

Sure, Larry bates thim all for luck! — 'tis he will make
his way,

And be the proide and honnur to the sod beyant the
say.

We'll soon be able — whisht! I do be singin' till I'm
hoorse,

For iver since a month or more, me Larry's on the
foorce!

There's not a proivate gintleman that boords in all
the row

Who houlds himsilf loike Larry does, or makes as
foine a show :

Thim eyes av his, the way they shoine—his coat, and
butthons too—

He bates them kerrige dhroivers that be on the
avenue!

He shtips that proud and shtately-loike, you'd think
he owned the town,

And houlds his shtick convanient to be tappin' some
wan down.

Aich blissed day I watch to see him comin' up the
shtrate,

For, by the greatest bit av luck, our house is on his
bate.

The little b'ys is feared av him, for Larry's moighty
shtrict,

And many's the litttle blagyard he's arristed, I
expict;

The beggyars gits acrass the shtrate—you ought to see thim fly!—

And organ-groindhers scatthers whin they see him comin' by.

I know that Larry's bound to roise; he'll get a ser-geant's post,

And afther that a captincy widhin a year at most;

And av he goes in politics he has the head to throive—

I'll be an Aldherwoman, Kate, afore I'm thirty-foive!

What's that again? Y'are jokin', surely — Katie! —
is it throe?

Last noight, you say, *he* — *married*? and Aileen O'Donahue?

O Larry! c'u'd ye have the hairt — but let the spalpeen be:

Av he demanes himsilt to *her*, he's nothing more to me.

The ugly shcamp! I always said, just as I'm tellin'
you,

That Larry was the biggest fool av all I iver knew;
And many a toime I've tould mesilf — *you* see it now,
av coorse —

He'd niver come to anny good av he got on the foorce!

THE IRISH ECLIPSE

IN Watherford, wanst, lived Profissorr MacShane,
The foinest athronomer iver was sane ;
For long before noight, wid the scoience he knew,
Wheriver wan shtar was, sure he could see two
 Quoite plain,
 Could Profissorr MacShane.

More power to him! ivry claare noight as would
pass,
He'd sit by the windy, a-shoving his glass;
A poke at the dipper, that plaised him the laist,
But a punch in the milky way suited his taste,—
Small blame
To his sowl for that same!

Now, wan toime in Watherford, not long ago,
They had what the loike was not haard of, I know,

Since Erin was undher ould Brian Borrhoime :
The sun was ayclipsed for three days at wan toime !

It's thrue
As I tell it to you.

'Twas sunroise long gone, yet the sun never rose,
And ivry wan axed, "What's the matther, God
knows ?"

The next day, and next, was the very same way ;
The noight was so long it was lasting all day,
As black
As the coat on yer back.

The paiple wint hunting Profissorr MacShane,
To thry if he'd know what this wondher could mane.
He answered thim back : "Is that so ? Are ye there ?
'Tis a lot of most iligant gommachs ye air,
To ax
For the plainest of facts !

"Ye're part of an impoire, yez mustn't forget,
Upon which the sun's niver able to set ;

Thin why will it give yer impoire a surproise
If wanst, for a change, he refuses to roise ? ”

Siz he,

“ That is aizy to see ! ”

A PRACTICAL YOUNG WOMAN

YOUNG Julius Jones loved Susan Slade ;
And oft, in dulcet tones,
He vainly had besought the maid
To take the name of Jones.

“Wert thou but solid, then, be sure,
’Twould be all right,” said she,
“But, Mr. J., whilst thou art poor
Pray think no more of me.”

Poor Jones was sad ; his coat was bad ;
His salary was worse ;
But hope suggested : “ Jones, my lad,
Just try the power of verse.”

He sat him down and wrote in rhyme
How she was in her spring,
And he in summer's golden prime —
And all that sort of thing.

The poem praised her hair and eyes,
Her lips, with honey laden.
He wound it up — up in the skies —
And mailed it to the maiden.

She read it over, kept it clean,
Put on her finest raiment,
And took it to a magazine
And got ten dollars payment.

THE POLYPHONE

PROFESSOR JONES was very wise,
And wore green goggles on his eyes,—
Or, 'twould be better, I suppose,
To say he wore 'em on his nose,—
And was so very tall and slim
The street-boys made a jest of him,
And to his garments would attach
The label: "Here's a walking match."
Yet this ungainly friend of ours
Made daily gain in mental powers.
To him, each coming moment brought
Some thing of moment — fact or thought —
And he could bid the boys defiance
When rambling in the paths of science.

For many weeks Professor Jones
Made study of the laws of tones.

Of phonographs and telephones
And megaphones he had a store
That filled up half his study floor.
The number of his tools, indeed,
Would make a work too long to read
With any sort of satisfaction ;
But magnets were the chief attraction.
With these he labored, much intent
On making a new instrument
Which should, by means of sound-vibrations,
Make both "transmissions" and translations.
Said he : " For speech, we must have tone,
And every language has its own,—
Our high-toned English such-and-such,
And so-and-so the lowest Dutch,—
Its given rules to guide inflection
In some particular direction.
There's philologic evidence
That all our languages commence
In some lost parent tongue,— each root
Each nation modifies to suit,—

And languages, 'tis clearly found,
In no way differ but in sound.
Now, diaphragms may well be trusted,
If once they're properly adjusted
For language A and language B,
According to the phonic key
(And then connected in a circuit
By persons competent to work it),
To transpose these root-derivations
Which differ with the tones of nations.
So if one 'sends' an English sermon
'Twill sound a sound discourse in German,
And our Italian learned at home
Can be well understood at Rome."

So saying, the Professor toiled,
And hammered, polished, filed, and oiled,
Until, adjusted and connected,
Behold the polyphones perfected !
One stood upon the study table,
And one was downstairs in the stable,

Where curious neighbors might not spy it,
And naught remained to do but try it.
A boy placed at the sending-station,
To speak (for a consideration)
The noble language of our nation,
Professor Jones hied up the stair
To listen to the sounds, up there,
Which would at once, no doubt, determine
If English could be changed to German.

That boy below, sad to relate,
Was not in a regenerate state :
His language did not smack of schools,
Or go by proper laws and rules.
His speech was very shrill, but oh !
Its tone was most exceeding low !
So then and there the stable rang
With slang, and nothing else but slang,
Which, having no equivalent
In German, clogged the instrument,
And while the disappointed Jones
Stood quaking at the horrid tones

That came from the receiving-plate,
Discordant, inarticulate,
The boy began the last new song —
There was a clang, as from a gong,
And shattered were the polyphones,
And eke the intellect of Jones !

THE FIRST CLIENT

A LEGAL DITTY TO BE SUNG WITHOUT CHORUS TO THE
AIR OF "THE KING'S OLD COURTIER."

JOHN SMITH, a young attorney, just admitted to the
bar,
Was solemn and sagacious as — as young attorneys
are ;
And a frown of deep abstraction held the seizin of his
face —
The result of contemplation of the rule in Shelley's Case.

One day in term-time Mr. Smith was sitting in the
Court,
When some good men and true of the body of the
county did on their oath report,

That heretofore, to wit: upon the second day of May,

A. D. 1877, about the hour of noon, in the county and state aforesaid, one Joseph Scroggs, late of said county, did then and there feloniously take, steal, and carry away

One bay horse, of the value of fifty dollars, more or less (The same then and there being of the property, goods, and chattels of one Hezekiah Hess),

Contrary to the statute in such case expressly made And provided, and against the peace and dignity of the state wherein the venue had been laid.

The prisoner, Joseph Scroggs, was then arraigned upon this charge,

And plead not guilty, and of this he threw himself upon the country at large;

And said Joseph being poor, the Court did graciously appoint

Mr. Smith to defend him — much on the same principle that obtains in every charity hospital, where a young medical student is often set to rectify a serious injury to an organ or a joint.

The witnesses seemed prejudiced against poor Mr. Scroggs;

And the district attorney made a thrilling speech in which he told the jury that if they didn't find for the state he reckoned he'd have to "walk their logs."

Then Mr. Smith arose and made his speech for the defense,

Wherein he quoted Shakspeare, Blackstone, Chitty, Archbold, Joaquin Miller, Story, Kent, Tupper, Smedes, and Marshall, and many other writers, and everybody said they "never heerd sich a bust of eloquence."

And he said: "On *this* hypothesis, my client must go free;"

And: "Again, on *this* hypothesis, it's morally impossible that he could be guilty, don't you see?"

And: "Then, on *this* hypothesis, you really can't convict;"—

And so on, with forty-six more hypotheses, upon none of which, Mr. Smith ably demonstrated, could Scroggs be derelict.

But the jury, never stirring from the box wherein they sat,

Returned a verdict of " guilty "; and his honor straight-way sentenced Scroggs to a three-year term in the penitentiary, and a heavy fine, and the costs on top of that ;

And the prisoner, in wild delight, got up and danced and sung ;

And when they asked him the reason of this strange behavior, he said : " It's because I got off so easy—for if there'd ha' been a few more of them darned *hypotheses*, I should certainly have been hung ! "

THE KNIGHT AND THE SQUIRE

SIR MORTIMER EUSTACE FITZ CLARENCE DU BROWN

Sat drinking his ruby wine ;
And he called : “ What ho ! Here — somebody go
And summon that squire of mine,
Young Patrick de Wachtamrhein.”

They passed the word for young Patrick, who came
And entered the castle hall.

“ Good master,” said he, “ and what now might it be
You’d have me be doing, at all ?
I’ll do it, whatever befall.”

“ Now hie thee up to the palace, good squire,
And get thee speech with the King ;
For fain would I know if this news be so
The palmers and peddlers bring —
Of a new crusade this spring.”

Young Patrick rode forth and young Patrick rode back ;
Sir Mortimer gave him go'd-den ;
“ Sir, war is declared, and a draft prepared,
For his Majesty must have men :
And gold has gone up to ten.”

Then good Sir Mortimer straightway went
To his merchant-tailor man,
And bought for a groat a new tin coat,
Which, cut on the latest plan,
Looked stylish as any tin can.

“ I sell you dot pair brass pants so sheap —
No ? Mebbe you comes again ?
Puy a rupper shtamp for to use in camp
For to marg your clodings plain ? ”
But the merchant talked in vain.

“ Come hither, now, Patrick de Wachtamrhein,”
Said the knight; “ thou art bold and stanch ;
No wight in the castle with thee can wrestle :
I leave thee in charge of the ranch —
Take care of my lady Blanche.”

Sir Mortimer rode with his banner displayed,—
Six cod-fish saltier-wise,—
But he did not go to crusade — oh, no !
But in search of army supplies,
Expecting the market to rise.

Said he : “ In the army I will not go,
And they cannot impress me ;
'Twere a vain attempt, for I am exempt,
As my age is fifty-three.
A contractor I will be.”

So he rode abroad, and he found, with joy,
That his neighbors' sheep looked well,
And their oxen stout went straying about
So fat that they nearly fell ;
And he drove them off to sell.

Young Patrick de Wachtamrhein heard these things,
And his eyes with tears grew dim ;
“ This castle should not,” he observed, “ God wot,
Belong to a chap like him,
For his moral sense is slim.”

So he seized Sir Mortimer's wealth and wife
 (Divorced by a chancery suit) ;
Of the house he was head in Sir Mortimer's stead,
 And he sent off the latter, to boot,
 To crusade as his substitute.

And, knights, moral ye all may learn
 From the tale that is here rehearsed :
Before you start for a foreign part
 'Tis best to provide for the worst,
 And mortgage your property first.

NINE GRAVES IN EDINBRO

IN the church-yard, up in the old high town,
The sexton stood at his daily toil,
And he lifted his mattock, and drove it down,
And sunk it deep in the sacred soil.

And then as he delved he sang right lustily,
Aye as he deepened and shaped the graves
In the black old mold that smelled so mustily,
And thus was the way of the sexton's staves:

“ It's nine o' the clock, and I have begun
The settled task that is daily mine ;
By ten o' the clock I will finish one,
By six o' the clock there must be nine :

“ Just three for women, and three for men,
And, to fill the number, another three
For daughters of women and sons of men
Who men or women shall never be.

“ And the first of the graves in a row of three
Is his or hers who shall first appear ;
All lie in the order they come to me,
And such has been ever the custom here.”

The first they brought was a fair young child,
And they saw him buried and went their way ;
And the sexton leaned on his spade and smiled,
And wondered, “ How many more to-day ? ”

The next was a man ; then a woman came :
The sexton had loved her in years gone by ;
But the years *had* gone, and the dead old dame
He buried as deep as his memory.

At six o' the clock his task was done ;
Eight graves were closed, and the ninth prepared—
Made ready to welcome a man — what one
'T was little the grim old sexton cared.

He sat him down on its brink to rest,
When the clouds were red and the sky was gray,
And said to himself: " This last is the best
And deepest of all I have digged to-day.

" Who will fill it, I wonder, and when ?
It does not matter : whoe'er they be,
The best and the worst of the race of men
Are all alike when they come to me."

They went to him with a man, next day,
When the sky was gray and the clouds were red,
As the sun set forth on his upward way ;
They went — and they found the sexton dead.

Dead, by the open grave, was he ;
And they buried him in it that self-same day,
And marveled much such a thing should be ;
And since, the people will often say :

*If ye dig, no matter when,
Graves to bury other men,
Think — it never can be known
When ye'll chance to dig your own.
Mind ye of the tale ye know —
Nine graves in Edinbro.*

NOTE.—The following is related concerning the death of Jemmy Camber, one of the jesters of King James I.

“Jemmy rose, made him ready, takes his horse, and rides to the church-yard in the high towne, where he found the sexton (as the custom is there) making nine graves — three for men, three for women, and three for children ; and whoso dyes next, first come, first served. ‘Lend me thy spade,’ says Jemmy, and with that digs a hole, which hole hee bids him make for his grave ; and doth give him a French crowne. The man, willing to please him (more for his gold than his pleasure), did so ; and the foole gets upon his horse, rides to a gentleman of the towne, and on the sodaine within two houres after dyed ; of whom the sexton telling, he was buried there indeed.”—ROBERT ARNIM, “The Nest of Ninnies.” (A. D. 1608.)

HOPE

NO MATTER where we sail,
A storm may come to wreck us,
A bitter wind, to check us
In the quest for unknown lands,
And cast us on the sands,
No matter where we sail :

Then, when my ship goes down,
What choice is left to me
From leaping in the sea —
And willingly forsake
All that the sea can take,
Then, when my ship goes down ?

Still, in spite of storm,
From all we feel or fear
A rescue may be near :
Though tempests blow their best,
A manly heart can rest
Still, in spite of storm !

STUDIES IN STYLE

BURNS.—*An Epistle to John Howard.*

DEAR SIR : I never saw your face
But yet, for some few moments' space,
To tak' a friend's familiar place
Is my design :
The friend o' a' the human race
Is surely mine.

Here is my han', sir ; will ye tak' it ?
An honest man may safely shake it,
For, 'spite o' Fate, nae powers shall mak' it
Be stained wi' crime —
May a' its little force forsake it
Afore that time !

'Tis little that I hae to offer—
My humble muse expects you'll scoff her,
And scarce she daurs to mak' the proffer,
 It is sae sma':
My best guid-will: pray tak' it of her,
 For that's my a'.

I hae nae flatt'rin' words to gie you;
I only say, sir, God be wi' you!
And whan from life He wills to free you,
 May you repair
To His ain house — I hope to see you
 Whan I am there!

This warld, I hope you may improve it,
But yet I doubt the de'il could move it
Except in tracks already groovit —
 Howe'er, if sae,
There is nae harm to *try* to shove it
 Anither way.

The warld, they say, is gettin' auld ;
Yet in her bosom, I've been tauld,
A burnin', youthfu' heart's installed —
 I dinna ken,—
But sure her face seems freezin' cauld
 To some puir men.

In summer though the sun may shine,
Aye still the winter's cauld is mine —
But what o' that ? The manly pine
 Endures the storm !
Ae spark o' Poesy divine
 Will keep me warm.

But I am takin' up your time —
Worth sae much mair than my puir rhyme
That ye will hear sic verses chime
 And no cry "hark !" —
Sae, wussin ye success sublime,
 I mak' my mark.

HERRICK.—*A Preachment.*

O MAN ! if hard thy fortune,
However fate importune,
Turn not to wrong — none find, or will,
Their good enlarged by doing ill.

As boats that row in Venice
Just so the life of men is :
Our course goes crooked o'er the tide,
With but a broken oar to guide.

Thy heart of oak then cherish,
Or sure thy soul will perish —
The soul is but a boat that goes
Whatever way the heart hath chose.

ALONG THE LINE

WHAT say? A song or a story? Draw up a box 'r a
chair,

All them that is wantin' to listen;—but, boys, I'm a-tellin'
you fair.

See this? It'll go for the feller what takes a notion to
laugh,

And him or me will be t' our folks a man or a foreto-
graph!

You didn't know Jim — of course not — I'm tellin' you
now of him:

A fearful chap on his muscle, a wild old boy, was
Jim;

But, boys, now don't you forgit it, he was as good and
square

As any man that the county held — and plenty o'
men was there.

Jim was a lightnin'-jerker — of course you know 't I mean :
He sot at his little table and rattled the Morse machine.
And *didn't* it rattle ! I bet you ! He'd studied it down
so fine,
There wasn't a one that could " send " with him, not
all along the line.

One time Jim sat in the office, a-smokin' and gazin' out,
When in come a feller was lookin' skeered — and nuff
to be skeered about !
He told his news in a minute, and, man as he was, got
cry'n' ;
And "*Yaller fever is broken out !*" went clickin' along
the line.

I think that line was connected with every soul in the land,
From what was sent t' us Howards — I'm one, d'ye
understand ?
Of all the parts o' the Union, no tell'n' which helped us
most ;
And we was a-workin', we was, sir ! And Jim he kep' to
his post.

All day long he was settin' pushin' away at the key,
Or takin' off from the sounder, just as the case might be ;
And most of the night a-nursin'. And what was bracin'
his heart

Was knowin' his only sister 'n' him was seventy miles
apart.

The air got full o' the fever ; grass grewed up in the
street ;

Travel the town all over, and never a man you'd meet,
'Cept, maybe, some feller a-runnin', who'd say, as he
passed you by :

" I'm tryin' to find the doctor," or " Billy is bound to die."

When folks went under — they might be the very best
in the land —

We throwed 'em into a white-pine box, and drayed 'em
out off-hand,

To wait their turn to be planted, without a word or a
prayer ;

There wa'n't no chance and there wa'n't no time for
prayin' or preachin' there.

Well, Jim, he minded his duty, and stuck to the work—
oh, yes—

But, boys, one Saturday night, when he was busy sendin'
the press,

There come a break, and his office call, and soon as
he'd time to sign,

“*Your sister's took the fever and died*” come flashin'
along the line.

Throw up the winder and let in air! How can I breathe
or speak

With—Jim? Oh, certainly; news like that was bound
for to make him weak;

But Jim sot straight at the table—he wa'n't the man
to shirk!

And, calmer and cooler than I am now, he finished the
company's work.

But then he dropped; and in four days more all that
was left of him

Was the wasted body that once had held the noblest
soul—poor Jim!

O boys ! that brother and sister was *brother and sister*
o' mine !

I wonder if ever we'll meet ag'in, somewheres along
the line.

HER CONQUEST

MUSTER thy wit, and talk of whatsoever

Light, mirth-provoking matter thou canst find :
I laugh, and own that thou, with small endeavor,
Hast won my mind.

Be silent if thou wilt ; thine eyes expressing

Thy thoughts and feelings, lift them up to mine :
Then quickly thou shalt hear me, love, confessing
My heart is thine.

And let that brilliant glance become but tender —

Return me heart for heart — then take the whole
Of all that yet is left me to surrender :
Thou hast my soul.

Now, when the three are fast in thy possession,

And thou hast paid me back their worth, and more,
I'll tell thee — all whereof I've made thee cession
Was thine before.

NELLY

Not long ago — perhaps — not long —
My soul heard no discordant tone,
For love and youth's sweet matin song
It hearkened to, and that alone ;

But now the song is hushed,— it hears
Strange music, in a harsher key,
For every sound a dirge appears
Since Nelly died, who lived for me.

The summer of my life is past ;
Eternal winter reigns instead ;
For how, for me, could summer last,
When she, my only rose, is dead ?

Sweet Nelly ! would thou couldst be yet,
As once, my day, my only light !
But thou art gone — the sun has set —
And every day, to me, is night.

Yet, be the darkness e'er so deep,
Let no more suns arise for me :
For night can soothe my heart to sleep,
And, Nelly, then I'll dream of thee !

COSMOS

WHAT to me are all your treasures ?
Have I need of purchased pleasures,
 Croesus, such as thine ?
Come, I'll have thee make confession
Thou hast naught in thy possession,
 And the world is mine.

I have all that thou hadst never ;
Though I'm old, I'm young forever,
 And happy I, at ease ;
All I wish I can create it ;
Wing my soul, and elevate it
 Where and when I please.

Of my secret make but trial :
Seest thou this little vial ?
 Dost thou not, then, think
Magic power to it pertaining,
All the world itself containing,
 Though it holds but — *ink* ?

AN EXCHANGE

DEATH seizeth not the soul;
When life is past control —
 No power left to hold it,
 When we have lost or sold it —
Why care we for the loss of lives
 Of suffering and sinning,
Well knowing that, for what survives,
 A life is just beginning ?

So, when our day arrives,
Why cling we to our lives ?
 Though they be clean and fair,
 Or stained with sin and care,
The bargain cannot be adverse ;
 An old life for a new one ;
Death cannot make a false soul worse,
 Or ever change a true one.

THE CEMETERY

I STAND within this solemn place
And think of days gone by ;
I think of many an old-time face ;
Here's where those faces lie.

I think of when, what time God please,
The hour shall come to me,
That, covered by the clay, like these,
My face shall masked be.

No marble monument will rise
Above that grave of mine ;
No loving friends will wipe their eyes
When life I shall resign.

But when I leave my life — have left
My every present care —
I'll find a home of care bereft ;
My friends are living there !

GOING

DRAW de curtain wider — wider — let me see de sun ;
I'll be trab'lin' higher'n it is, 'fore de day is done.
Prop a cheer ag'in de door, an' let me heah de
 breeze,
Soundin' like a runnin' ribber, 'mong de china-trees.

Sing de " Rock of Ages," Phillis — sing it soft an'
 low ;
Dat's de tune I wants to heah ag'in afore I go.
Don't you choke an' sob, ol' 'ooman — sing it brave
 an' bol' :
Ah, dat music ! — seems to me it's singin' in my soul !

Listen!— don't you hear de dog? I knows what makes
him howl.

Las' night, up on top de house, dere sot a whoopin'
owl;

Den dat whip-poor-will, you knows you'se'f you heerd
it cry —

All dem things has knowledge ob a pusson gwine
to die.

I's a-gwine to glory, Phillis, 'way up in de sky,
Whar de houses is ob gol'— an' you'll come by an' by!
I ain't gwine to settle down yit; dey will le' me wait
Tell you comes to jine me troo de nebber-shettin' gate.

Take me easy as you kin, an' lif' me up in bed;
Fotch an extry pillow heah, to put beneef my head;
Dar—I's ready, now, to hab de paf to Hebben
showed —

Dem 'ar guidin' angels mus' be stoppin' on de road!

Phillis, do you reckon dat a harp is hard to play?
'Spose I'll l'arn to pick it, ef I practise eb'ry day.

Hark!—de angels is a-comin'—heah 'em fly, *ker-swush!*

Dere mus' be a mons'ous covey, comin' wid a rush!

Heah 'em flyin' down de chimbly! No, dat *ain't* de win'—

You kain't heah 'em, 'kase yoah ears is stoppered up wid sin.

Glory! Glory! Glory! I's a-gwine—yes, I's a-gwine!
I's de one dat's taken, you's de oder lef' behin'!

Angels is a stan'in' 'roun' me, hol'in' out dey han's!

Now I sees de ribber Jordan, runnin' in de san's.

Don't you see dat angel, p'intin' at it wid his sword?

Hush!—don't 'sturb me talkin'—I's a lookin' fer de ford!



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